

HCS HB 1789 -- STUDENT TRAVEL HARDSHIPS

SPONSOR: Dieckhaus (Schad)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 12 to 5.

This substitute changes the laws regarding travel hardships for public school students by removing the issue of educational harm from consideration when determining whether it is necessary to change the boundary line between seven-member school districts when one district votes for a boundary change and the other district votes against it and prohibiting a board of arbitration to contain a current or retired school administrator. In the provisions regarding the Commissioner of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reassigning a pupil because of a travel hardship, the substitute makes the reassignment mandatory under certain conditions on minimum distances, adds class size considerations, and continues the hardship while the student and any sibling are enrolled at the same attendance center. If a parent withdraws a student after receiving a travel hardship, any subsequent hardship assignment is discretionary rather than mandatory.

The substitute also allows, but does not require, the commissioner to reassign a student because of natural barriers, travel time, or distance.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that evidence suggests that boards of arbitration frequently favor keeping district boundaries the same. Having clearer standards for a travel hardship reassignment and making sure that parents know about travel hardships is one of the few alternatives to changing district boundaries.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Schad; Michael Massman; Tammy Grant; and Cory Kraft.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.